

# **WITH THE TENTH FIELD ARTILLERY AT THE SECOND BATTLE OF THE MARNE**

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I am setting down herein a very brief and incomplete outline of the operations of a battalion of 75-mm. guns, from July 7, 1918, when they detrained at Collumniers and La Ferte Gauche, until they were relieved near Cierges on August 1st.

The combatant units of the battalion, for convenience's sake, are referred to as Batteries A, B and C, though at the time of this operation, these designations were almost forgotten, and in their place the less formal names of "Arthur," "Alf" and "Homer" were used exclusively. These names were given the batteries at the time that "Rattlesnake" christened the Regiment "Reason," and the Regiment in turn foisted the name of "Ragamuffin" upon the battalion.

"Ragamuffin's" existence was limited to his period of usefulness as camouflage, but Arthur, Alf and Homer, despite changes in personnel, clung to the organizations with a strong hold, and still, I trust, are proud names with the First Battalion of the 10th Field Artillery.

For days before departure from our training camp at Coetquedan we had sensed a certain gravity of the situation on the Marne, and were more or less prepared for the atmosphere of tension which greeted us at Viffort upon reporting to Brigade Headquarters the night of July 7th. There the necessity for rapid movement above all else was emphasized, and accordingly the batteries were pushed to the utmost, by day and night, that they might reach their previously located and partially prepared positions prior to the expected attack.

In our instructions for meeting this attack, which had been expected nightly for some time prior to our arrival, unusual emphasis was placed upon the importance of our switch-line positions, or the positions to which we would retire. It seemed almost a foregone conclusion that our resisting power could not withstand the German attack and that we would be forced back to the previously reconnoitred and partially prepared line extending roughly between Gland and Courboin. Fortunately our training had dealt lightly with movements to the rear, and if the occasion arose for

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retirement we did not recognize it as such, and succeeded in our ignorance.

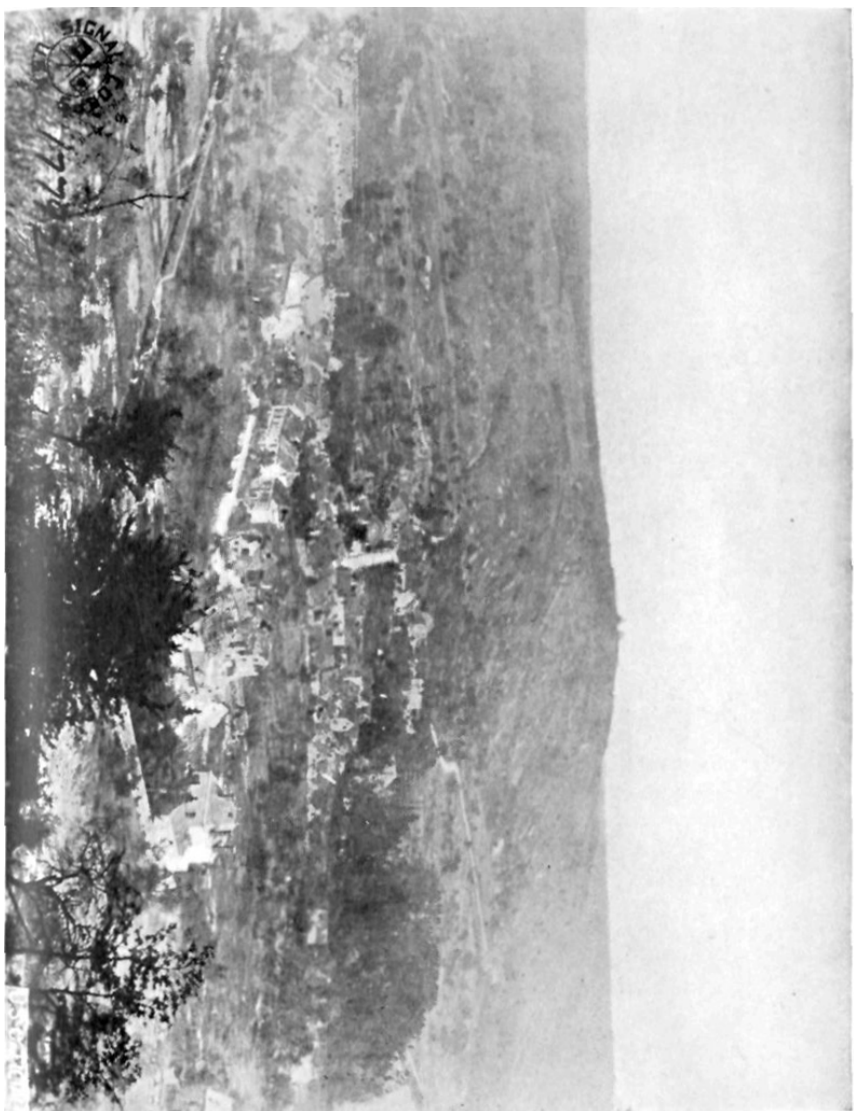
The positions occupied by the batteries of the battalion were in support of the right sector of the Third Division line held by the 38th Infantry. Battery A was on the right and entirely without the divisional sector. It was located in the open, though somewhat screened by a line of trees, about 500 metres to the north and east of Janvier fme. Battery B was in the wooded line south and east of Le Souverein fme., and Battery C occupied a position to the north of Grieves fme., at 07-67, until July 12th, when the battery was moved to a position 700 metres northwest of St. Eugene, at 20-58.

Battery A was commanded by Captain Arthur Brigham, Jr., an officer who was commissioned from the ranks of the regular army in the early part of 1917. This battery occupied its first position on the night of July 9th, and at once concentrated on the difficult problems of observation, communication and supply. Its separation from the rest of the battalion by a deep valley with an air-line distance of about 3 km. to Battalion Headquarters, as well as its location in the midst of the French troops, rendered it detached in fact, if not by order, particularly during periods of heavy hostile artillery fire. This separation of the battalion over a front of 4 km. by airline, and a much greater distance for purposes of communication, was, as can be seen from the map, made from necessity rather than choice. The sector held by our infantry was so formed in the depth and on the sides of the Surmelin Valley that there was no alternative, provided the sector was to be fully covered.

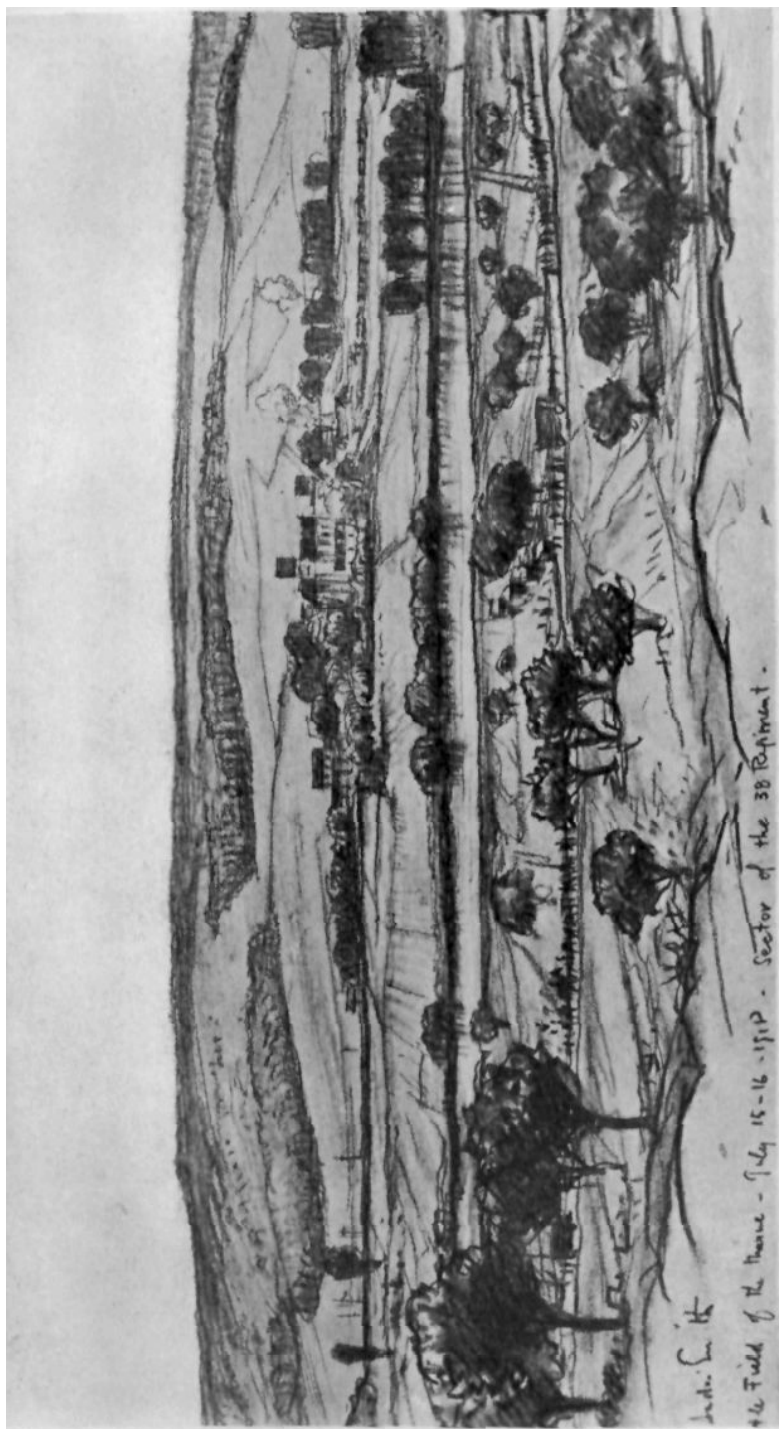
This battery's position was well organized by July 14th. Two wire lines over separate routes had been laid to Battalion Headquarters, and these lines cross connected. Pits had been provided for the men and some shelter for ammunition. The battery had established an observation post well to the front on the face of the hill to the north and east of Moulins.

About 2 A.M., on the morning of the 15th of July, the French infantry, which occupied the sector, began its withdrawal, and by 6 A.M. had taken up a defensive position through Janvier fme., 500 yards behind the battery. During this time the battery lost its observation detail of one officer and five men, who were captured by the enemy.

The French artillery in the sector had begun its withdrawal as early as one A.M., and by day-break all of the artillery in front of, or on the flanks of Battery A, had been silenced or withdrawn. Battery A continued its fire until its ammunition supply was exhausted at about 5 A.M. The battery was then held inactive



BIRDS-EYE VIEW OF JAULGONNE, JULY 30, 1918. LOOKING NORTH OF EAST



#### MEZY AND SURROUNDING COUNTRY

This drawing was made on the slope of the hill east of Chartèves and looking due south. The road between Jaulgomme and Chartèves is seen in the foreground. Beyond the river Mezy is marked by the church and a scattering of houses. To the left of the church is seen the railroad station and leading on to the left is the railroad embankment. From a drawing by Captain J. Andre Smith.

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in the attempt to locate a re-supply of ammunition, until about 7:30 A.M., when the enemy's advance line occupied the woods at their right front, and opened a heavy rifle and machine-gun fire on the French infantry at Janvier fine.

Being between the fire of the two lines and with no ammunition, the battery commander disabled his guns, assembled his men, carrying with them their wounded, and withdrew, reporting directly to the regimental commander at Courboin.

The personnel of Battery A was then held at the disposal of the Regimental Commander, pending its re-supply with guns. This re-supply was taken up at once, though Battery A did not occupy another position until July 19th. This position was at 09-63, west of the Bois de la Jute. The guns of Battery A, I believe, were recovered on the 18th of July, by a detail from this battery, but how many of them had to be replaced from the rear upon the occupation of their new position, I do not know.

Battery B was commanded by Captain Alfred K. King, a graduate of West Point in the class of 1916, who was later promoted to the grade of Major, and was killed in action on November 7th.

This battery was located in by far the most exposed position of the battalion, but by some freak of fortune their losses were comparatively small. Their cover or concealment was little, and their protection practically nil, except that which had been provided through diligent digging prior to the attack. The losses they did suffer were principally in men transporting ammunition through a difficult wood road from the dumps in rear to the battery. This road was almost impassable to transport of any kind, and with the shortage of animals and vehicles a large part of the ammunition obtained on the night of July 14th, or shortly thereafter, was transported by hand. About 4 A.M. on the morning of the 15th, the ammunition with this battery was exhausted, but a search located approximately 1000 rounds of shell in a nearby deserted French position, and this supply was used until seven o'clock in the morning, when it in turn ran very low. Though the German front elements had advanced to a point little more than 1000 yards beyond the battery, firing was suspended, retaining the few remaining rounds for use as the enemy came into view from the guns.

In the meantime, every effort was made to supply ammunition from the rear, but this supply was extremely slow and uncertain, due to the demoralized state of transportation and to the fact that all dumps of any size had been blown up; consequently, scattered ammunition, particularly from French positions, was about all that we could count on, and the search for, and location of such, ammunition was carried on with enthusiasm akin to that found in an Easter egg hunt.

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Battery C was commanded by Captain Homer Cook, an emergency officer from the 1st Training Camp, who was later promoted to the rank of Major and commanded this battalion. His battery suffered greater casualties on the night of the 14th–15th of July than either of the other two in the battalion. This was due, I think, partially to the fact, indicated from German maps obtained after the attack, that the location of this battery was near the storm centre of their artillery preparation; and in part possibly to the fact that its location had been better determined by the Germans. In all batteries, prepared auxiliary positions were used prior to the night of the 14th–15th, for practically all fire except the O.C.P. and the barrage, and great emphasis was placed on the concealment of the normal positions. This battery, however, either on the evening of the 13th or early in the evening of the 14th, had been required, on short notice, to fire a gas concentration considerably out of its sector, which necessitated the removal of its pieces into the open, and into a line approximately 90 degrees to its normal front. On the night of the 14th–15th, it lost two guns by direct hits, one officer and six men killed and 40 wounded, this being a very large percentage of the number with the firing battery at that time.

There was considerable difficulty experienced in this battery, also, in obtaining ammunition. However, I think the shortage there was not so marked as in the case of the other two batteries of the battalion. A great deal of ammunition of this battery was carried by hand through a wood road, which was practically impassable for wheeled vehicles.

Anticipating the enemy's action by 30 minutes, our general O.C.P. was fired at 11:45 the night of July 14th–15th. By 12:30 it was being returned to us with interest, and throughout the remainder of the night both the enemy and ourselves kept up a constant and heavy artillery fire. The retention of wire communication, even with the closest units, was almost impossible, notwithstanding great effort and much self-sacrifice on the part of the communication details.

The echelon of the regiment was consolidated about 7 km. in rear of our positions, and with it fortunately had been retained practically all of the animals, primarily with a view to their protection from gas. With the firing battery, there were about 30 on the night of the 14th–15th of July, and of these there were no more than two or three survivors.

I have mentioned the observation post of Battery A which was used primarily by that unit. In addition, the battalion established an observation post in the front edge of the woods near 05–80, which was utilized by both Batteries B and C, and on some occasions, I believe, for the adjustment of the fire of Battery A. In

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addition to this, Battery B had an auxiliary observation post directly in its front, and Battery C, in a tall tree near its position. The battalion O.P. indicated above had been established in a shallow trench dug for the purpose. About 30 or 40 yards to the west of this trench was one of two steel observation cages used by the French artillery in the sector. It was referred to as "Georgette," I believe, and the other known as "Brunette," or something to that effect. It consisted of a steel box about four feet square and about 6 feet high, set well into the ground and provided with a spindle for carrying scissors, glass and a swivel seat for the observer. It was connected underground to the rear with a rather comfortable dugout. During the night of the 14th–15th of July, the observer from the battalion on duty in our shallow and uncomfortable trench, observed the abandonment of this steel O.P. by the French, and straightway proceeded to make himself and detail comfortable therein. On the 17th, the French returned to claim it, but were unsuccessful. It had been captured by the battalion, and was jealously guarded and transported until we left our rest area for the St. Mihiel offensive, when we stored it in a little French town, where it possibly is still.

We thought, prior to the 14th–15th, that we were supplying ourselves with ample wire communication through the duplication and cross-connection of all lines from O.P's to batteries and to battalion P.C. However, that night's experience indicated that open lines could not be kept in operation through such a bombardment. On the 15th, we conceived the idea of using the large concrete aqueduct shown on the map, passing near our O.P. at the north, thence to the south and east within a few hundred yards of Battery B, Battery C, and the battalion P.C., thence to the rear in a general southerly direction to Montlevon, and beyond, for the protection of as much of our lines as possible. On the 16th, we got into this aqueduct, through shell holes in its surface, and ran lines with which we had no further difficulty. At this point, the aqueduct was about six feet in diameter and remained the same size, I believe, for some distance in both directions. It was so pierced with shell holes that it carried little more than six inches of water. One surprising thing to me was that it had not been used or considered for use before.

Through the night of the attack, on the morning of the 15th, and into the 16th, the German aviators caused us a great deal of discomfort, coming down at times to the very tops of the trees in the vicinity of the batteries and attacking them with hand grenades and machine guns. Battery C used its machine guns to advantage on these occasions, and claims in its report the grounding of a plane at 11:00 o'clock on the morning of the 15th. However, a considerable difficulty with these guns was to restrict their fire to times

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when it was necessary, the tendency—and a very strong one—being to shoot as soon as, and as long as, the plane could be seen.

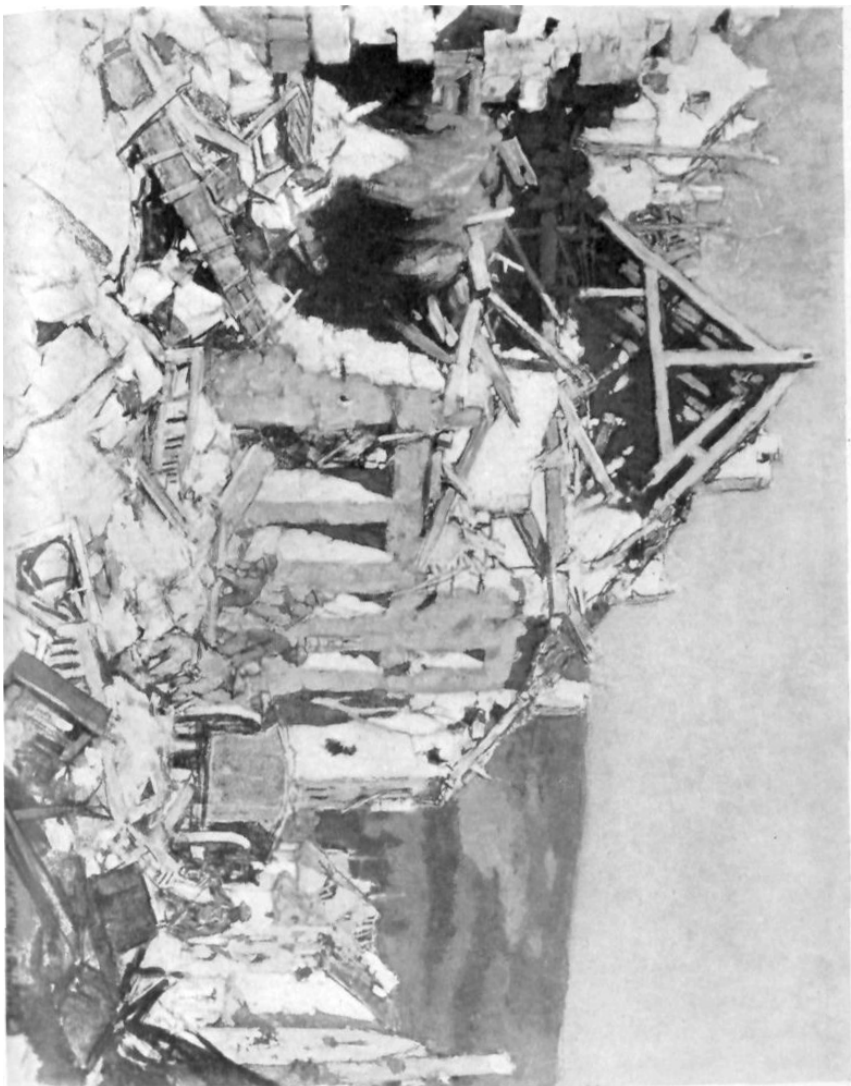
About six o'clock on the morning of the 15th, one of our liaison officers with the advance infantry battalion, came to my P.C., shot through the forearm in two places by his own pistol, which had been taken from him by a German and turned against him when he broke away and escaped. The sergeant with him at that time, as his assistant, was killed in the attempt of the two to escape. Information sent from this officer on two occasions earlier in the morning had been of considerable value in keeping the battalion informed as to the situation.

The 15th and 16th were rather uncomfortable. Colonel McAlexander, commanding the Thirty-eighth, had moved his P.C. to St. Eugene during the night of the 14th–15th, and in the morning of the 15th reports were conflicting and the situation, of course, somewhat doubtful. We had lost one battery; our infantry had withdrawn to within 1000 yards of another battery, and the infantry on our left was passing through our position toward the right rear. It looked as if we had an excellent chance of being completely surrounded. It was possible at this time to have gotten from the rear sufficient transportation to withdraw our guns, had this procedure been advisable. I consulted with Colonel McAlexander, at St. Eugene, as to his intentions, knowing that should he move to the rear we would be in a rather serious position. He informed me in no uncertain terms that he was going to stay where he was, so we patterned our plans accordingly—dug in a little better, and left the horses with the echelon.

One somewhat amusing feature of this morning of the 15th was the opening up of fire from a German machine gun immediately in rear of the infantry P.C., at St. Eugene. This disturbed the whole community for a short time, until it was found that the gun was a captured one, being used by our own troops.

From meagre records on hand, I find that on the 14th of July, the three batteries averaged 65 men and 7 horses each with the firing battery, and that the Battalion Headquarters had 35 men and 6 horses. The remainder of the men and animals were with the echelon in the Ht. Forêt. There were approximately 2000 rounds of ammunition in each battery, and the batteries at this time were expending about 400 rounds each per day. This supply of 2000 rounds was somewhat augmented during the day of July 14th, and its increase was feverishly hastened during the early part of the night. In addition to this ammunition, there was a considerable dump in the Bois de la Jute, about one km. from both Batteries B and C. Most of this dump was blown up during the night, though early in the bombardment both batteries increased their supply therefrom.





CLEARING THE ROAD THROUGH MONT ST. PÈRE  
From a drawing by Captain A. V. Ayward.



#### TRAFFIC TO MONT ST. PÈRE

The valley of the Marne at Mont St. Père was alive with artillery activity during the American advance. This view is from a part of the town on the hill. From a drawing by Captain George Harding.

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On the night of July 21st, Batteries A and C were advanced to positions about 500 metres north of Crezancy, Battery A in Bercet fme., and Battery C directly west of it, 500 metres. Battery B remained at Souvrien fme., and the Battalion P.C. was moved to Crezancy.

On the 22nd, a reconnaissance across the river was made from Charteves in the direction of Jaulgonne. This reconnaissance resulted in a tentative decision to place two batteries south of the Charteves-Jaulgonne road, about one km. east of Charteves, and one battery in the front edge of a strip of woods running along the southeast side of this road at a position near 28-18.

The movement across the river was begun with the advance of Battery B from its rear position to the crossing at Mezy, where the engineers were constructing a pontoon bridge. The battery advanced after dark to the railroad embankment and there waited throughout most of the night, the Battery Commander, with his details, meantime making his reconnaissance and preparing his position. Delay in the construction of the bridge necessitated the movement of Batteries A and C, followed by Battery B, to the vicinity of Gland, where the battalion crossed the river early in the morning of the 23rd. We moved from there through Mount St. Père and Charteves, to the positions previously selected, arriving at these positions about 10 A.M. Batteries A and C occupied their positions without difficulty.

The original plan to occupy Battery B's position at night by skirting around the lower edge of the woods, was found to be impracticable by day, due to observation from the enemy in le Charnel Château. The stretch of road, about 700 metres long, extending through the woods was fairly well obscured from view along its sides close into the trees, but was being constantly harassed by small calibre artillery fire. Three guns of Battery B were unlimbered at the turn in the road (23-13), camouflaged with broken branches from the trees, and wheeled by hand into their position. This position, though in the extreme front edge of the woods, was screened from actual observation by brush and small trees. The position was successfully occupied, but it, as well as the approaches thereto, was under such continuous fire that it was necessary to withdraw the pieces at about noon. The battery was then taken by a precipitous and rocky ascent to a position in the woods on the high ridge to the north and east of Charteves, near 18-18. On the next day, Batteries A and C were moved to the high ridge over the same route followed by Battery B, and that night the entire battalion occupied positions in the vicinity of 26-30. The battalion P.C. was moved from its location of the 22nd at 24-14, into Jaulgonne. On the night and morning of July 26th, the battalion was moved to

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positions about one km. west and south of le Charmel, and that afternoon occupied positions on the outskirts of the town itself.

A part of the 27th and the morning of the 28th were spent in reconnaissance in the direction of Villardelle fine. At noon on the 28th the battalion was moved into position along the front edge of the woods northeast of Chalet de Villardelle, near 82–68, this much to the horror of a French lieutenant-colonel of cavalry, commanding a cavalry unit at that time champing at the bit in the woods alongside these positions. He attempted to explain that it was neither the time nor the place for artillery, but we came and he left.

On the movement to these positions, I waked up to the fact that the echelons of the various batteries were scattered over a depth of about ten miles. Upon leaving our stabilized positions on the Marne, each battery commander had been given a battery complete, with which to do as he saw fit. Each captain had a different idea as to the best positions for his echelon unit, and consequently, though firing batteries were kept close together, the rear units were scattered all over the country. Appreciating this situation on our move from le Charmel, I consolidated the three battery echelons with the battalion echelon into a single unit, placing in command the best officer for the purpose who was available. This consolidation functioned with marked efficiency and satisfaction, and was employed throughout the remainder of our operations in France.

A reconnaissance made on the 29th took a party of one officer and three men to the northeast of these positions and around the rising ground to the southeast of Roncheres. Upon reaching the open, it was seen that the reconnaissance necessitated the use of terrain not hidden from observation by the enemy, so the men in the party were sent back with the belief that fire from artillery would not be wasted on a single figure. This belief proved to be entirely erroneous, the officer being carefully followed with well-directed fire from a 77 around the entire face of the hill, and to within a comparatively short distance of Villardelle fine.—the objective of the reconnaissance.

On the night of July 31st, we moved from these positions to positions 1200 metres north of west from Roncheres, near 00–90. These positions were in area assigned to the French, and during their reconnaissance we were informed that they could not be occupied except through the authority of a French officer, whose location we sought diligently for some time, but without success.

On the night of August 1st we were relieved, and started our march to the rear.

Throughout this period of 23 days, the battalion had expended an average of 100 rounds per gun per day, this average being approximately the same for both the 12-day period from July 10th